



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Food and Drug Administration  
Nashville District Office  
d1845b

297 Plus Park Boulevard  
Nashville, TN 37217

May 26, 1998

**CERTIFIED MAIL - RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED**

Decatur Utilities - Water System  
1002 Central Parkway, SW  
Decatur, AL 35609

ATTN: David L. Parks  
Business Development & Asst. GM

Dear Mr. Parks:

**Warning Letter No. 98-NSV-14**

On April 9, 1998, Investigator David R. Heiar conducted an inspection of a vessel watering point facility located at the foot of Oak Street, NE, Decatur, Alabama. It was determined that the Delta Queen and Mississippi Queen riverboats have historically obtained water for potable use from a fire hydrant at this location, known as Rhodes Ferry Park.

The continued use of a fire hydrant is considered an unacceptable source of potable water for interstate vessels. The primary concern involves acceptable sanitary water connections for potable water supply. Accordingly, we are assigning a **PROVISIONAL CLASSIFICATION** to this potable water source.

It is our understanding that the standard construction of fire hydrants includes the presence of "weep holes" to allow drainage of water to prevent freezing. When such drainage is to the soil, the possibility exists for water contaminated by exposure to the soil to backup within the hydrant shell and contaminate the water contact surfaces. Such hydrant installations cannot be considered satisfactory for potable water use.

If the hydrant is a frostproof type construction without weep holes, or the standard hydrant is installed in such a way that it provides a satisfactory air gap direct to the atmosphere for any drainage, such hydrant could be considered acceptable.

To ensure a safe, sanitary supply of water to interstate vessels, we strongly suggest that a separate potable water hydrant devoted to that purpose be installed at the dock or within a reasonable distance of the shore for satisfactory hose connections.

The hydrant must have adequate water pressure, have no connections to any water system of lower quality, have supply lines above the normal high water line and have a suitable cut-off valve and properly installed approved backflow prevention device in line to the hydrant outlet.

Hydrant outlets must be directed horizontal or downward and must be protected by caps with keeper chains when not in use. If a ground level box is provided, adequate drainage must be employed.

These and other requirements are outlined in the *Inspection Summary - Vessel Watering Point Sanitation* form FD 2521 issued to you by Investigator Heiar.

Please advise this office within 30 days of the actions you intend to take to ensure compliance with these sanitation requirements. Your response may be directed to the attention of Frank J. Jancarek, Compliance Officer, at the above letterhead address.

Sincerely,



Raymond K. Hedblad  
Director, Nashville District

RKH:FJJ:mrd

cc: Joseph Scott Young, President  
Delta Queen Steamboat Co.  
30 Robin Street Wharf  
New Orleans, LA 70130-1890